DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 915 CE 017 366

AUTHOR Marshall, Lila
TITLE The Role of Career Education in Desegregating Schools in Large Cities.
PUB DATE Apr 78
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the 1978 National Leadership Conference for Administrators of Vocational Education in Large Cities (Columbus, Ohio, April 16-20, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anglo Americans; Black Students; *Career Education; Educational Innovation; Enrollment; Mexican Americans; Problems; *Racial Integration; *School Community Relationship; *School Planning; *School Role; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *Texas (Dallas)

ABSTRACT

A desegregation plan ordered for the Dallas [Texas] Independent School District (DISD) included voluntary desegregation on the high school level through the use of career education in "magnet schools" (MS) (those that attract students by offering special career, vocational, or other programs). The plan, drawn up by a task force of Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and Whites, included (1) seven MSs to be located within a two-mile radius of the central business district, (2) implementation by academic year 1979-1980, (3) MSs (high schools only) to be open on a voluntary basis, (4) ethnic ratios equal to the ratios of the 9-12 student population of the DISD as a whole, plus or minus 10%, (5) encouragement of partnerships and working relationships between institutions of higher learning and the business and cultural communities and the MS, (6) a minimum enrollment of 500 students for each MS, and (7) extensive integration through busing the 4-8 grade level (17,000 students). Ten million dollars of a bond issue were earmarked for the magnet school program. During the first year, more than 4,100 students attended four new magnet high schools; and during the second year, 6,000 students attended them. (A goal of 7,000 has been set.) Conclusions drawn were that students were enthusiastic about the career education approach to school, that previous experience with the Skyline Career Development school, a type of magnet school in the DISD, facilitated the plan and that reading and comprehension scores improved, some dramatically. Problems encountered were minimal parental involvement and difficulty in attracting enough whites to the schools. (VB)

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The Role of Career Education in Desegregating Schools in Large Cities

By

Lila Marshall

Former Briefing Attorney to

U.S. District Court for

The Northern District of Texas

Judge William M. Taylor, Jr.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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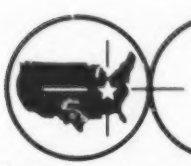
Presented at the

1978 National Leadership Conference for
Administrators of Vocational Education In
Large Cities

April 16-20, 1978

The National Center for Research In Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

CE 017 366



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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1960 KENNY ROAD · COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210

Geographic size, historic patterns of geographic grouping of ethnic groups, and population of large urban school districts present unique problems when an attempt is made to desegregate these districts. Traditional tools of desegregation, such as the pairing and clustering of white schools from one area with black or minority schools from another area, have proven successful in small towns where distance is not a problem, and in rural areas where buses have long been the mode of transportation to school. But often such pairing and clustering is ineffective in desegregating large urban areas, where the distance between white areas and black or other minority areas is great, and nearby schools are bypassed in favor of further but racially mixed schools. The use of transportation in aid of such pairing and clustering has evoked the cry of "forced busing," and in many cities, efforts to resist such "coercion by the courts" have resulted in demonstrations, both peaceful and violent, boycotts of the public schools, and a dramatic rise in the student population of private schools.

The alternative to coercion by the courts is of course voluntary desegregation. The early "freedom of choice" desegregation plans, where students were free to choose any school in town to attend, were found to be ineffective in achieving desegregation in most areas, since white and black students tended to choose their former schools because of familiar social contacts, while the disparity of educational offerings in these schools continued. However, the desegregation plan ordered in 1976 by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas for use in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) includes a form of voluntary desegregation on the high school level which is proving effective; that is, the use of career education in the form of magnet schools to draw students from all races together to pursue common interests.

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During 1975 and 1976 I served as the law clerk for Judge William M. Taylor, Jr., the United States District Judge in Dallas who handed down the decision regarding the Dallas schools, and I was in a unique position to observe the interrelationship of the community, court, litigants, and school district. I was also able to observe the manner in which career education became a vital instrument in desegregating the DISD on the secondary level. The same technique can be applied in other large urban districts, and thus a study of the Dallas experience will provide comparisons and suggestions for your circumstances.

The DISD is the eighth largest school district in the nation, covering an area of approximately 351 square miles. During the 1975-76 academic year, its 180 separate campuses housed 141,122 students (including kindergarten). The racial composition of the DISD during that school year was 41.4% Anglo, 44.5% black, 13.4% Mexican-American, and 1.0% "other."

The lawsuit which produced the 1976 court order regarding career education as a tool of desegregation was filed in 1970 by the Dallas Legal Services organization. The plaintiffs represented a class of black and Mexican-American students in the DISD. In 1971 they obtained a ruling from the court that vestiges of a dual school system remained in the DISD, in terms of facilities, staff, and materials, and that the minorities, which were largely separated in the district from the white majority, were not receiving the same educational opportunities as the white majority. The court adopted a desegregation plan for the DISD which called for the pairing and clustering of elementary schools by closed-circuit T.V. only, and the pairing and clustering of secondary schools and the use of transportation or busing to achieve desegregation for grades 8-12. The plaintiffs were not satisfied with the plan and appealed the case to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Fifth Circuit immediately stayed

the portion regarding elementary schools, but allowed the transportation of secondary students to proceed. Approximately 5,000 black and 1,000 white high school students were ordered to be bused under this order.

Realizing the importance of community support for a desegregation plan, the judge approached business and civic leaders in 1971 to solicit their support for the plan, but his overtures fell on deaf ears. The white community wanted no part of a busing order, and spoke out against the plan publicly and privately.

The Fifth Circuit did not rule on the plaintiffs' appeal until July, 1975. At that time they rejected the student assignment portions of the District Court's 1971 order and ordered the court to formulate a student assignment plan for the DISD "using and adapting the techniques discussed in Swann," a 1971 Supreme Court ruling. The techniques referred to are pairing and clustering. In a footnote immediately following this imperative the Fifth Circuit noted that the DISD could use the funds set aside for the T.V. program to buy buses.

The theory behind pairing and clustering is that children of minorities will never be given equal educational opportunities unless they are sitting in the same classrooms with Anglo children. Without arguing the merits of this theory, it is clear that if the majority Anglo community resists this tool of desegregation to the point of removing their children from the district, then the system of education becomes segregated once again -- with inner city public schools enrolling the children of minorities and the suburban school districts and private schools enrolling Anglos. This pull-out by Anglos also generally lowers the tax base of large urban school districts, and removes the incentive of those who can contribute time, effort, and money to the public schools which most need it.

Whether due to the unpopularity of the 1971 plan for the DISD, or uncertainty as to whether or not that plan would be accepted by the Fifth Circuit, or other demographic causes, between 1970 and 1975 the DISD lost approximately 30,000 Anglo students, 40.9% of its Anglo student population. During that five year period the racial make-up in the DISD changed form 69% Anglo, 32% black and 8% Mexican-American to 41.4% Anglo, 44.5% black, and 13.4% Mexican-American.

It had become clear to the judge by 1975 that a plan which called merely for the mixing of racial groups, the movement of bodies between buildings, would not be effective in reversing this trend in the DISD, particularly at the secondary level. Of the over 1,000 Anglo students assigned to formerly all-black secondary schools under the 1971 order, fewer than 50 attended in 1975. The judge was convinced that in order to have an effective desegregation plan all the schools had to be attractive and offer a quality education, so that students (and parents) would not mind the extra time spent riding on a bus to another part of town. I can recall Judge Taylor making statements such as, "The important thing is not who you sit next to; it's what you're getting from the educational system," and "Body-count is meaningless; quality education is essential."

The judge was also convinced that the court alone could not make a desegregation plan work, that only the community, court, and school district working together could make a desegregation plan successful. And so, as in 1971, the judge called for help and support from the community at large, and particularly from the business community. The judge would often say, "If the business community can arrange to have the greatest airport in the country built (meaning the Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport), it can manage to make the DISD the best school district in the nation"; and "The business community,

with its vast economic and intellectual resources, should contribute to the public schools and the students who will some day be a part of that community"; and "The business community must become involved. They have clout and can sway public opinion and can make a success or a failure of the public schools."

In September of 1975 the judge made it clear in open court that he welcomed input from all segments of the community as to the terms of the plan which would ultimately be adopted, as well as to its implementation. His was an "open door" policy.

In October of 1975, a group of citizens formed a committee composed of six blacks, seven Mexican-Americans, one American Indian and seven Anglos to consider the question of desegregation of the DISD. This group became an affiliate of the Dallas Alliance and became known as the Education Task Force of the Dallas Alliance. The Dallas Alliance is a community service organization designed to act on and aid in the solution of urgent issues of the community. It consists of a forty member Board of Trustees, and 77 correspondent organizations in the Dallas area.

This Task Force met for a period of four months and spent approximatley 1500 hours together devising concepts and principles for a desegregation plan for the DISD. They sent various members of their group to cities around the country to discover all possible tools of desegregation, and met with or talked to thirty leading figures in the desegregation field. On February 17, 1976 the Alliance group filed their plan for the DISD with the court, and the court granted them the status of Amicus Curiae for the purpose of presenting their ideas and plan to the court.

When the various plans were presented to the court, it was evident that all participants in the suit recognized the great potential which magnet schools held as a tool of desegregation. (I am using magnet school here in

the sense of a school which attracts students because of special career, vocational or other programs that the school offers.) All concerned in the Dallas suit could view the outstanding success the Skyline Career Development Center (Skyline CDC) had had since its inception in 1971. The Skyline CDC, a 9-12 high school, was developed by the DISD with the extraordinary involvement and financial investment of the business community in Dallas. It offered 28 career clusters as student options. Each year between 1971 and 1975 over 2500 students came from all over Dallas to obtain career training as part of their secondary education, thus making it the largest voluntary busing program in the nation during those years.

The plaintiffs suggested two plans to the court. Both plans called for extensive pairing and clustering on the 1-12 grade levels, but they also called for the use of magnet schools. One plan suggested the construction of magnet schools in the inner city to draw Anglos into those areas, and the other plan called for magnet schools in all schools which had a predominantly minority enrollment prior to 1975 to enhance the attractiveness of those schools.

The DISD's plan called for the establishment of 17 magnet schools to serve the entire district, in addition to limited pairing and clustering. Ten of these magnets were to be for the elementary level, offering "fundamental" programming or "individually guided" programming. Seven of the magnets were to operate on the secondary level, and were to offer a variety of programs that had been offered successfully at Skyline CDC.

The NAACP's plan suggested that, in addition to extensive pairing and clustering, some magnet schools should be operated on a district-wide basis. The court's expert suggested a basic pairing and clustering plan, and expansion of the magnet concept wherever possible.

The plan of the Educational Task Force of the Dallas Alliance was the only plan to propose that desegregation on the secondary level be achieved solely by using magnet schools. According to their plan, magnet schools would be located within two-mile radius of the central business district. Seven magnet schools were to be implemented by academic year 1979-1980. The schools were to be open on a voluntary basis, but with ethnic ratios in each magnet that of the ratios of the 9-12 student population of the DISD as a whole, plus or minus 10%. Partnerships and working relationships between institutions of higher learning, the business and the cultural communities were encouraged with each magnet school. Each magnet was to accommodate a minimum of 500 students, and was to open as rapidly as it filled. The Task Force plan also called for the creation of numerous magnet schools on the elementary level.

The tri-ethnic Task Force which had drawn this plan had agreed on this method of desegregating the secondary schools after much discussion, argument, negotiation and compromise. The members were all concerned with the quality of education provided to students, with the ineffectiveness of the 1971 pairing and clustering order on the secondary level, and with the exodus of Anglo students from the DISD. They were also aware of the public resistance and resultant ineffectiveness of busing orders in other cities which were concerned only with physical mixing -- "body count" -- and ignored or did not affect the quality of education offered. Thus their plan provided for extensive pairing and clustering at the 4-8 grade level (busing approximately 17,000), and then desegregation-by-choice, so to speak, through magnet schools which maintained places for students of each race, on the high school level.

The judge was impressed by the plan of the Task Force, by the tri-ethnic nature of the group, by the community character of the group, by their careful research and consideration of all possible tools of desegregation, and by their commitment to make the plan a success in Dallas. After considering all the alternative plans, the mandate of the Fifth Circuit and the general body of law regarding desegregation of school districts, the judge chose the Dallas Alliance plan as the desegregation plan for the DISD.

Such a voluntary busing plan through the use of magnet schools on the secondary level was unprecedented. Yet the judge believed that such a plan would be more effective than any other method of desegregation, that it was realistic and that, with the business community's support, it would work in the DISD.

So business community involvement was included in the 1976 court order. Specifically, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, as a representative of the business community, was ordered to develop a format for the magnet schools to be implemented in fall 1976.

With business community task forces involved in the planning and implementation, four magnet high schools opened in the fall of 1976. Located within two miles of the central business district, these schools were patterned after successful Skyline CDC clusters. Specifically, they were the Arts Magnet High School, the Business & Management Center, the Transportation Institute, and the High School for Health Professions.

Massive public relations efforts for the magnet schools included recruiting of students, a public campaign to bring awareness of the plan to the citizenry, on-going monthly publications designed to stimulate business interest in the schools and the creation of an adopt-a-school project involving

companies with every target school within the district. Development of work experience opportunities for all magnet students was also a priority.

Other efforts included assistance in the passage of an $80 million school improvement bond issue and work in the magnet schools by loaned executives. Over $10 million of this bond issue has been earmarked for the magnet school program. Additional resources were made available to the school district in the areas of financial planning and management studies.

The involvement of the business community was a much needed resource to the accomplishment of the goals of the Dallas court order. It was also necessary for well respected persons in the community to come forward and speak out for the peaceful desegregation of the schools. Their involvement in implementation of educational experiences as provided by the magnet schools was a key ingredient in public acceptance of the plan.

In September 1977 the Magnet School for Law and Public Administration, the Hotel/Motel Management Cluster, and the Human Services Center opened.

During the first year of this plan, more than 4,100 students attended the four new magnet high schools, along with 2500 students at Skyline CDC. During 1977-1978, the second year of this program, over 6000 students were voluntarily bused on the secondary level to attend magnet schools in Dallas. For the 1978-1979 school year, a goal of 7000 students has been set.

And how have students reacted after being at a magnet school for a year? Time after time students express joy at having found meaning in the educational process, and enthusiasm for their career cluster and the part-time work opportunities which it entails. In an article in a local magazine in September 1977, Roger Stanley, formerly a "D" student at a private prep school in Dallas, but now an enthusiastic student at the Business and Management Cluster who is bringing home "A's," said of his job as a salesman at a local department

store shoe department, "I've learned I really enjoy working with people. I like to satisfy whatever needs they have. And, you know, I think I'm pretty good at it." David Carapetyan, a student at the Arts Magnet, said that he had found an atmosphere at the Arts Magnet in which "art for art's sake can flourish along with the more commercial varieties," and that he now has fresh hope that he has found a new direction for his career, namely sculpture and painting. Carolyn Armstead, a student at the High School for Health Professions, feels that her career goals have been brought sharply into focus, and that her experience as a nurses' aide at a local hospital has been invaluable.

The court appointed an external auditor in 1976 to report to him as to the DISD's compliance with his order. Here is what the auditor said last summer:

> "There are some understandable problem areas that appear to be inherent in the establishment of magnet schools. The Court Order was issued on April 7, 1976, and the district had to prepare the physical facilities, recruit students, staff, and prepare curricula for magnet schools between April 1976 and the beginning of school in late August 1976. The experiences with Skyline likely made such endeavors possible. It is doubtful that any large school district without prior experiences with an educational center similar to Skyline could have made such progress in such a short period of time. The auditor would do a disservice and an injustice to all of the magnet schools if generalized statements were made about all of them collectively, because each magnet school is unique,

and each was established to provide for students of varying interests and aspirations . . . .

Student records were examined in each magnet school in an effort to determine progress. The number and kinds of records kept varied with each magnet to provide for the needs indigeneous to each educational center. There does appear to be some common denominator in all schools. The freedom of choice appeared to be prevalent in every school; students were enrolled in each magnet because they desired to be there.

The April 7, 1976 Court Order stipulated that each student could have the option of remaining in his/her assigned school or to opt for a transfer to another school in the district under proviisions for a Minority-Majority Transfer, Majority-Minority transfer, or to take advantage of a curricular program not offered in the assigned school. The order was very explicit in defining the conditions under which a student might attend any school in the district. The choice was left to the student provided all other conditions were met (i.e. ethnic balance was not disrupted, the desired curriculum was offered and space was available). Thus, the responsibility for selecting a school rested with the student and/or his/her parents . . ."

The auditor visited all the magnet schools. The following was reported regarding two of them:

"High School for the Health Professions

The Health Professions Magnet has a teacher-student ratio of approximately 1:20. Out of a total enrollment of 796 full and part-time students, there are 231 Anglos (29.0%), 479 Blacks (60.1%), and 86 Mexican-Americans (10.9%).

The school has been adopted by Dental Auxiliaries, Baylor Hospital and several other private and public institutions. There is an active Health Advisory Committee consisting of sixteen Anglo members and a Dental Committee with three Blacks and thirteen Anglos. Academic instruction is punctuated with regular field trips to area clinics and hospitals.

The academic facilities are crowded, and students lack adequate locker space. Despite these mild disadvantages, student morale is high, and the overall attitude of the students can be labeled enthusiastic. Parental involvement, however, is minimal.

Business and Management Center

The Business Manget has a total student enrollment of 1436 full and part-time students. The majority of these students are Black, 1021 or 71.1%. Anglo and Mexican-American students number 20 (13.9%) and 9 (0.6%), respectively. The teacher-student ratio is approximately 1:15.

Discipline problems are minimal and are handled primarily through parent-teacher conferences. There is, according to one counselor, an inability to attract Anglo students. As of April 20, 1977, there were still 150 Anglo stations available.

Some of the adopting agencies which also participate in the internship program include: Zales (Jewelers), Sanger Harris (Department Store), Fidelity Union (Life Insurance), Republic National Bank, and Minyards (Food Store). Community support for the Business Magnet appears to be quite strong. Student morale and motivation seem to be very high. The faculty members at this Magnet are enthusiastic about the curriculum offerings and the philosophy of the Magnet concept.

Finally, the facilities at the Magnet are very adequate to conduct the academic program offered by the institution. Not only is there a wide variety of business hardware, but the educational surroundings within the Magnet itself present an atmosphere which seems to be conducive to learning . . . .

Overall, the Magnets showed evidence of providing resources and services congruent with their educational goals. The philosophy behind the educational thrust is both educationally innovative and long past due on the educational scene. There are, however, shortcomings. Attention needs to be directed to the absence of recreational facilities at the Magnets. During interviews with the Auditor, Magnet staff members indicated a deep concern about the academic standing (educational preparedness) of their students. In general, staff members felt that conducting remedial work was not within the scope or nature of their function as professionals imparting expertise within their own area of academic competency. Furthermore, some counselors and campus administrators voiced regret concerning the aura that some non-Magnet institutions within the district use the Magnets as "dumping ground" for academically "borderline" students or "chronic" disciplinary

repeaters. The permeation of this negative attitude vitiates the strength of the educational concept.

Reading achievement in the Magnet schools remains a problem. Remedial reading work is necessary in many instances to bring these students to a reading comprehension level suitable for Magnet-level work. This can cause time delays in employment-entrance and encumbers the academic thrust of the Magnets."

Special emphasis on reading is taking place presently. Recent testing of students at one particular magnet, the Business and Management Center, showed that reading scores have jumped as much as three grades in comprehension a d seven grades in speed during this year alone.

A feeling of responsibility, a care for equipment and facilities, the absence of disciplinary problems, and high attendance figures -- these are important by-products created by the students' knowledge that they are receiving solid preparation to enable them to earn their places in the world, instead of merely absorbing information they may never need.

Students in the magnet schools are voluntarily being bused into an integrated environment because they are receiving a quality education at the end of the bus ride and because they share a common interest in career education. The incentive of avoiding the unskilled labor pool upon graduation by having a marketable skill causes students to attend school with students of other races, and the result is voluntary desegregation.

The ultimate guarantors of the success of the magnet school program are the kids. They are the ones who sign up and attend the schools, and

without them the desegregation effort fails. If the trend toward greater student enrollment in the magnets continues, this tool of desegregation will be an unqualified success in the Dallas Independent School District.